



The Navy Lark Appreciation Society Newsletter

NAVY DAYS



BBC RADIO 4

THE NAVY LARK 17

LESLIE PHILLIPS

JON PERTWEE

RONNIE BARKER



TAKING SOME LIBERTIES

BBC RADIO EPISODES 2 x CD

Ronnie Barker as Engineer Quince

THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO





Here we go on another voyage with Troutbridge. Flags has been rather busy popping in and out of the office due to the fact that we have had some delightful letters from the cast and our membership. I hope everyone anticipating a reply has now received one! However, before we travel too far into the Solent, a hearty welcome to those of you enjoying the sea breeze and the ever fragrant smell of Brickwoods Brewery as we steam past Old Portsmouth and outwards.

Non residents of Pompey may have yet to become cognisant of this particular Portsea Island brewery. It ceased brewing when the Navy Lark was decommissioned. Coincidence? We all knew Pertwee was spending far more than he was earning. The Brickwoods company made a huge impact on the streets of Pompey one way or another in the hundred or more years it served the community. Our brave boys would most assuredly indulge in a glass of the local brew be it on the Harbour Station; or any one of the hostelrys adjacent to Main or Unicorn Gate. Brickwoods has left a fascinating legacy of architectural styles on the streetscape and a nostalgia in some for those 'good old days'.

Huge thanks are due to Heather Chasen who has been busy looking out some marvellous documents. You will get a chance to peruse these highly entertaining letters from her Troutbridge days in this issue. Heather generously forwarded these to us in order that we might share in the real sense of fun the cast enjoyed with the public as fiction collided with reality. Sadly for Heather her promised promotion went the same way as the collection tin Henry Povey put round on HMS Raleigh: they both disappeared. It is strongly suspected that various Pertwees were responsible for the vanishing cash and the loss of the paperwork at HQ. Heather's rank never officially rose to that of Leading Wren with Troutbridge, despite the valiant attempts of others to ensure her overdue promotion. However, when the ship's log for 1975 is inspected it is possible to see that Henry's anticipated and augured "absolute cracker" certainly did arrive. April Walker joined the crew.

BRICKWOOD & CO'S BRILLIANT ALES.



BRICKWOOD & CO'S BRILLIANT ALES.

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Which only goes to show that nothing changes when it comes to power and the ability to exercise it.



Grateful thanks to Judy Cornwell for her interest and support. We look forward to her autobiography, scheduled for release this Autumn. More details will appear in a future issue. Meanwhile, we have a recent broadcast from Radio 4 (April 2005) featuring Judy reading the first of 5 stories about 'Brighton Women' and recorded before a theatre audience. The performance has been placed in the library.

Leslie Phillips enjoyed two media appearances in early Spring 2005 and fortunately we have both items on tape due to NLAS members being very well prepared because they have recorded these items for us. Well Done Stephen, Well Done Lynne! We also must extend our huge thanks to Michael Parkinson's radio producer, Simon, for sending us a tape of the interview from Parkinson's Sunday Supplement. Leslie Phillips and Michael Parkinson only spoke for 20 minutes but it was a delightful interview and one that I hope the two get round to continuing in the near future. The conversation was never banal, and Leslie was never forced to jump through the stereotypical 'hoops' younger more self centred interviewers seem to demand. Leslie was also featured on the Paul O'Grady show broadcast on 11 April. A cassette of both interviews is available from the library.



comic invention provided Troutbridge with someone so impractical and needy that the last place anyone would expect to encounter this individual would be in the highly sophisticated power base of a British warship. Yet we discover that somehow this innocent has secured an officer post as a senior engineer. Lt. Queeg has no innate skills when it comes to starting and subsequently operating machinery. Ronnie's genius was to to apply his highly developed skill of interpreting regional accents and fuse that with his admiration of Chic Murray's comedic delivery. Queeg is a well meaning, hugely ineffective, hapless officer charged with the responsibility of getting Troutbridge seaworthy. Everyone on board must rely on his technical know-how to ensure that the vessel remains operational and totally reliable throughout its time at sea. His animated and desperate conversations leave the listener fearing the worst together with the awful realisation that this frigate is extremely vulnerable. To have an incompetent crew on the bridge is bad enough, but to discover that the person charged with the responsibility to get the ship actually moving is totally incapable introduces a sense of panic to the listener. After Ronnie left the cast the character was dropped from the writing, but in season

Chic Murray was given a chance to reprise Queeg. The two shows he played in were 28.08.1973 and 02.09.1973. The difference in acting could not be more noticeable. Chic is a fine performer, but his ability to interpret Queeg was not up to Ronnie's pacy and frenetic standard!

If you have never heard any Chic Murray material a CD is currently available (see Wardroom) and we have a cassette sampler in the library for you to listen to if you would like to familiarise yourself with Chic's humour before you buy. The CD is currently available in DeLuxe, standard and budget formats depending on source, packaging and supplier. We have compared a budget version £5 with a standard CD £12.00 and the material appears to be identical.

BBC7 ended its run of 12.30 / 19.30 Thursday Navy Lark broadcasts the second week in February (10.02.2005) with "Operation Recovery" from June 1971. Unexpectedly, the channel returned the show on 23 March 2005 but in a new time slot. The Navy Lark now goes to air at 14.30 and is repeated the following morning at 06.30 am. The first show in the new run was "The Slogan Contest".

Devotees of Lt. Queeg will be pleased to know that the imminent release of Navy Lark 17 features four memorable episodes from that luckless mariners life: 11 July 1965 "Taking Some Liberties" (the NLAS library has this show entitled "Back in the Muck Again" - because ship's company return from leave) is the fifth time Queeg appears on Troutbridge, but in this episode the character is formally introduced and enjoys a substantial outing with three amusing appearances as a subsidiary character. The Other three episodes are 13 November 1966 "The PM Papa", 20 November 1966 " Getting Rid of Pertwee" and 27 November 1966 " Off To Sea At Last" The Navy Lark 17 compilation introduces us to a new female cast member Jan Waters, who appears as Jan. The shows will be in the shops in early June.

The Engineer Queeg character Ronnie Barker developed was an instant hit with the listening public. Ronnie's

Just about to be released on DVD is a movie with Ronnie Barker, Maggie Smith and Timothy Spall. "My House in Umbria" is described as a picturesquely shot film and is a story about a group of unlikely people thrown together in adversity who find solace and friendship.



Advance notice: BBC Audiobooks are planning to release "The Best of the Navy Lark" in June 2006. We have no further details at present but hopefully we will be able to tell you a little more later this year. What you can be sure of is that the next three annual June releases of The Navy Lark are assured because the selections have been short listed. More details to follow.



It was a surprise to see The Navy Lark Collectors series 2/2 on Ebay before it was available in the shops. The CD box set includes a rare and prized gem that was only available to Navy Lark members "The Wren's Reunion". The show, performed before an audience at The Festival Hall has the voices of Alastair Scott Johnston and Lawrie Wyman as well as the crew of Troutbridge. The performance was not miked for recording purposes and some dialogue is a tad difficult to comprehend - but what a marvellous show to add to your collection! Despite the size and uniqueness of the event Capt. Christopher Page at the Naval Historical Branch continues to rummage through the archives, on our behalf, to learn more about this event.



Many of you have taken the trouble to forward cuttings to us for the archive. It is hugely helpful when this happens, and I would much prefer to see an article many times than learn about it after it has gone to landfill!

By way of connecting ideas - landfill. Some of you will be aware I nearly got my hands on a radio resource to envy a few years back. A collection of tapes including the South African version of The Navy Lark was up for grabs. Despite my best efforts I was two weeks too late and the material ended up in a hole in the ground somewhere. If you know of anyone with off air recordings on reel to reel or cassette and perhaps disc do let us know. We have contacts who can preserve and restore these fragile recordings before they are copied and shared.

A further article about the South African (Springbok Radio) version of the Navy Lark appears in this issue. The memoir is a reprint from an actor from the Springbok cast which has been posted on the Pumamouse website. The views expressed are his own personal reminiscences. The NLAS can neither endorse nor substantiate the article. Pumamouse is delighting hundreds of people each week with her growing archive of material from South Africa's radio days, before television became THE entertainment medium of choice.

A further instalment of the missing Navy Lark recording (12.01.1962) is reproduced in script form to complete this issue.

A limited number of editions of Navy Days are still available as back issues together with various other items of NLAS merchandise. Please check Pertwee's Plunder to see if he can supply any of your needs.

Correspondence from two marvellous chaps from HMS Troubridge this last month managed to prove once again that life imitates art. Look out for "Tales from the Bridge" real life accounts on board Troubridge. It will be an occasional series and promises to bring a smile.

For the majority of you it is subs time. A reminder is enclosed in the envelope if it applies to you. We are able to keep the charge at £8.00 by shaving 4 pages from the magazine. The original intention was only to publish 12 pages each quarter. Somehow after a couple of bumper editions and the Jon Pertwee Special the page count stayed high which has made the magazine hugely enjoyable to produce but rather costly. However, when compared to other Old Time Radio magazines we hope you will believe that the Society provides satisfactory value.



Back in The Wardroom

RADIO
COLLECTION

THE
NAVY LARK
Volume 17

BBC

BBC AUDIO

RADIO COLLECTION

THE NAVY LARK 17



LESLIE PHILLIPS

JON PERTWEE

RONNIE BARKER

Featuring
Ronnie
Barker as
Engineer
Queeg

TAKING SOME LIBERTIES

FOUR ORIGINAL
BBC RADIO EPISODES

2 x

RUNNING TIME
1 HOUR 30 MINS

10196



THE CHIC MURRAY SHOW



ARCHIE McCULLOCH PRESENTS
BRITAIN'S FUNNIEST COMEDIAN
LIVE IN CONCERT

Chic Murray Show

A selection of live performances including songs and stories:

The Doctors Surgery
Wait 'till the Sun Shines Nellie
The Train Compartment
The Politicians
Old Faithful
The Cricket Ding by the Old Glay Blick
Big Han(d)s

Navy Lark VOLUME 17

11 July 1965

Taking Some Liberties

(aka Back in the Muck Again) Series 7 Episode 1

13 November 1966

The PM Papa

Series 8 Episode 11

20 November 1966

Getting Rid of Pertwee

Series 8 Episode 12

27 November 1966

Off to Sea at Last

Series 8 Episode 13

Cassette Tape

LESLIE PHILLIPS *guests*

Parkinson's Sunday Supplement R2 27.03.2005 12.02

20 minutes

Paul O'Grady Show ITV1 Mon 11.04.2005 17.00hrs

10 minutes

-----00000-----

Chic Murray *sampler*

CD

JUDY CORNWELL

Scenes of Seduction R4 Mon 7 March 2005 14.15

Brighton Women R4 Mon 25 April 2005 15.30

Chief of the Home Office
1st Floor
1st Floor
1st Floor
1st Floor

15 November 1975

The Producers
"The Navy Lark"
BBC
London W1A 4AT

Dear Sirs,

It is with some considerable concern that the members of this
less have noticed that your records department is not up to scratch
as regards advancement of John Weather Of Sea.

According to our calculations John Weather, notwithstanding his
advancement, should be in possession of these Good Conduct Medals.

Please find enclosed two Advancement Authorisations for your action
and return to this less, as we consider that she deserves advancement
after having to tolerate the motley crew of P.S. The Admirals.

Yours very faithfully,

J. R. G. P.

J. R. G. P.
Chief Clerk

J. R. G. P.
J. R. G. P.
Chief Clerk

D. W. P. L. W.
D. W. P. L. W.
Chief Clerk

R. W. P. L. W.
R. W. P. L. W.
Chief Clerk

H. R. P. L. W.
H. R. P. L. W.
Chief Clerk

Encl: Advancement Authorisation (2)

ADVANCEMENT AUTHORIZATION

CAPTAIN/COMMANDING OFFICER
HMS TROUTBRIDGE

CHIEF AND PO WRENS' MESS
HMS RALEIGH

Effective date

The undermentioned rating is at the top of the Roster and is overdue for advancement

NAME AND INITIALS	SERVICE NO.	RATING TO BE ADVANCED TO	According to Chief and PO Wrens' Mess records	
			Seniority	Basic date of passing
CHAPMAN E	4175032	CHIEF WREN PO WREN (1975)	15.11.75	10.1.76.

If these particulars are NOT CORRECT by BEC Service Certificate, the Chief and PO Wrens' Mess, HMS RALEIGH are to be informed and NO ACTION taken on this authorisation.

If the rating is in all respects qualified and, in your opinion, fit to perform the duties of the higher rating, she may be advanced as stated above as from the date of this authorisation, and this form is to be returned to this department after necessary action, signed by her Commanding Officer.

If doubt exists whether she is suitable in all respects for advancement, after 'canoodling' with her superiors, or if the rating has committed an offence which affects her eligibility for advancement, action should be taken in accordance with the best traditions of "The Navy Lark".

Approved.

(Capt. H. Povey, R.N., Defence &
Victory Medals, O.C. 99th Flotilla)

Endorsed.

(Alastair Scott Johnston
O.C. H.M.S. Troutbridge)



J M Relph

J M RELPH
Chief Wren

J Orriss

J ORRISS
Chief Wren

D W Fullyblank

D W FULLYBLANK
Chief Wren

P Wade

P WADE
Chief Wren

H Bishop

H BISHOP
Petty Officer Wren

ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
HMS RALEIGH

From the Officer Commanding
H.M.S. Troutbridge



Dear Ladies,

A copy of Leading Wren Heather Chasen's advancement authorisation is returned to you duly authorised and countersigned, together with a letter from the Officer Commanding, 99th Flotilla, R.N.: Capt. Povey. The original will be forwarded to Wren Chasen.

It is regretted that she has not, currently, three good conduct medals. She should, indeed, have them but she lost them, as have so many of those aboard my ship, in the hurly burly of life when some less than creditable actions have unfortunately come to light. It is a hazard of life inescapable when in proximity to HMS Troutbridge.

While Wren Chasen's promotion will entail her leaving Captain Povey's office she will still be impersonating sundry other naval personnel in and around H.M. Dockyard. She does, of course, know too much about us to be allowed to wander too far away and too far out of sight.

In concentrating your concern on Wren Chasen, you would seem to have omitted more important considerations, to which I hope you will now devote your attention. Where, for instance, is the authorisation for my advancement?

Yours sincerely,

(Alastair Scott Johnston,
Major, R.A.C., Officer Commanding
H.M.S. Troutbridge)

P.S. You didn't know a tank officer commanded Troutbridge? Come now, it's the only logical branch of the service to chose from!

Chief and PO Wrens' Mess,
H.M.S. Raleigh,
Torpoint,
East Cornwall,
PL11 2PD.

MMA


From the Officer Commanding
H.M.S. Troutbridge



Dear Leading Wren Chasen,

I enclose documents relevant to your promotion to me through Captain Povey (General) which have been passed on to you. You should not expect them to be notified in due course but for workers only and does not apply to naval personnel or members of Equity. Nevertheless, congratulations on your advancement.

(Alastair Scott Johnston)
Officer Commanding
H.M.S. Troutbridge



From the Officer Commanding,
99th Flotilla, Royal Navy

To the Chairperson,
Advancement Committee, WRNS,
HMS Raleigh

The delay in the advancement of No. W117523Z, Wren Chasen, H., is entirely due to inefficiency in Naval Records. Naturally it is not my fault as I'm a happily married man. Her seniority does, however, date from the 20th March, 1959, not the 15th of November 1963, as stated in the advancement authorisation passed to this office. As I have constantly pointed out, my extremely arduous job is not made any easier by stupid clerical errors in other offices and I shall make sure this one is brought to the attention of higher authority.

However, as the establishment of my flotilla only provides for a Wren, and not a Leading Wren, as my personal secretary, Leading Wren Chasen is being transferred to other duties. As my dear wife, Ramona, is unaware that I am shortly expecting the arrival of an absolute crack... another Wren in replacement, this matter will please be regarded as TOP SECRET.

A tin is currently circulating round the flotilla and, if it can be extracted from C.P.O. Pertwee with its contents even remotely intact, a presentation will shortly be made to Leading Wren Chasen. However, before that, and in view of your interest, the tin will be circulated round HMS Raleigh. Give generously.

(H. Povey, Capt. R.N., Defence &
Victory Medals)
Officer Commanding, 99th Flotilla,
Royal Navy



Pertwee's PLUNDER



Welcome to Pertwee's Emporium of perfunctory procurements. In here you will find all manner of delightful clobber like what I found in Povey's Office as well as what Number 1 signed for but never got.

First up is a selection of periodical type things any fan of the Senior Service would be proud to have in their locker. Unfortunately, I'm a bit short of a couple of issues due to the fact that I had to scarper before dockyard security made their occasional visit. Anyway here is what you will find in each issue:

- 08 LIMITED STOCK**
 Ronnie Barker writes
 Liz Morgan remembers playing Nessie
 Leslie Phillips in "Tales of the Backbench"
 "Professor Branstawne" "Les Misérables"
 "Outside The rules"
 Pertwee's Progress – an appraisal of Jon Pertwee

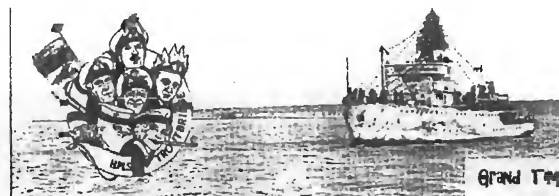
- 10/11 Bumper issue**
 June Whitfield
 Heather Chasen on TV
 Tenniel Evans memories of Troutbridge
 Todhunter Brown
 The Ronnie That Got Away
 Engineer Queeg
 "Present Laughter" "Relative Values" – Leslie Phillips
 Jon Pertwee reprint:
 "I Saw the Doctor as an Interplanetary Crusader"
 Navy Lark family tree – A4 insert for current members only

- 12/13 Bumper Issue**
Jon Pertwee Special
 Biography
 On Film
 In Print
 On Disc
 Obituaries
 Navy Lark family tree (part 2)

- 14 LIMITED STOCK**
 BBC Worldwide releases: "The Collection" Volume 1, Volume 2,
 Navy Lark 15
 Leslie Phillips: Casanova '73
 Filmography
 On Video
 BBC 7
 Navy Lark Family Tree (part 3)

- 15 Alastair Scott Johnston**
 BBC Worldwide **Series 1** CD box set, Comedy Zone CDs
 Original script for 12.01.1962 (a missing recording) starts
 The Navy Lark in Colour?
 Stephen Murray
 Navy Lark Family Tree (part 4)
- 16** Heather Chasen remembers...
 Judy Cornwell
 BBC Worldwide **Navy Lark 16 & Series 2 part1** box set
 12.01.1962 script reprint continues
- 17** HMS Troubridge memories
 Jon Pertwee radio Variety appearances
 Springbok Radio's version of The Navy Lark
 Leslie Phillips
 Miriam Margolyes
 12.01.1962 script reprint continues
- 18** The TV Lark
 Evelyn Wells at the BBC
 Springbok Radio – a memoir
 12.01.1962 script reprint continues

Christmas Cards



Grand Time Everyone



Lurking in a dusty cupboard, and where Mr Phillips thought they were safe, I found his Christmas card hoard. Well I think it is only fair to share my good fortune with you all. There is a long card 29cmX 10cm with Troutbridge festooned with bunting and a Christmas tree coming into Pompey. The second card is A5 sized and features a rather handsome bunch of people on it, enjoying the party season. I wonder who they are? (I'm sorry to mention these - just as Summer approaches - but I don't think I will get another chance, this year, to advertise in this very salubrious periodical.

I had better just mention, I couldn't swipe any envelopes for any of the cards, so I'm just off loading the pretty pictures, cheap-like.

Navy Days back issues available:



08

Limited stock

10/11

12/13

14

Limited stock

15

16

17

18

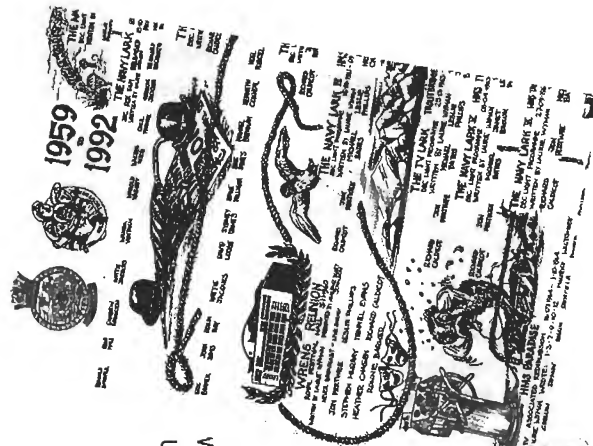
The Navy Lark (1959) movie

A5 sized 'Lobby cards' reproduced from the originals



The Navy Lark Family Tree

Previously printed in 4 sections on the back pages of Navy Days, now available as an A2 poster



A5 sized notelets

Radio Days: colour print

NLAS lifebuoy: B&W

Troutbridge emblem: colour print

Navy Lark movie poster: full colour

The Navy Lark 1959 movie poster

An alternative to the full colour 'Front-of-house' poster was produced in a limited palette of blue and cream (it measured approximately A3 size) for the movie press pack and an invited audience. We have reprinted this unique item from October 1959.

Actual size



Troutbridge Pin
Coloured
enamels on
gold finish
Available in
two fixings:
stud
clasp/pin

That lummock Herbert Wilcox decided to make a movie and re-cast Troutbridge, in fact it wasn't even Troutbridge it was called HMS Compton. Only Lovable Leslie ended up in the film, and Ronald Shiner played **ME!** The indignity.... Well, I have got my own back. I found out where he has been keeping his precious archives and I'm going to give you a chance to enjoy them too. The journalists and invited audience to the October 1959 launch of the movie received a press pack and that included a reworked poster image in blue and cream. The full colour cinema poster is a little different, so here is your chance to play spot the difference and have something unique in your collection. The original artwork was Imperial size, but today we would call it a little smaller than A3. I also found the original front of house Lobby Cards. I have reprinted these, postcard size, and they feature 8 scenes from the film and I have included a B&W copy of the movie poster – but which version?

With all the tooings and frowings on Troutbridge you could be forgiven not to know who came and went over the years. The Family Tree is really a good place to begin. It lists the dates of every series. It includes all cast members and announcers and when Lawrie was joined by George Evans to help him write the show. The chart is full of detail. It should be a national treasure - like me.

How about a nice badge? I've seen the invoice for these *and* they are marvellous. No cheap tat 'ere – just good old British craftsmanship. Wear one in the best of circles and be admired for having survived a lifetime on the most accident prone ship Her Majesty's Navy ever had the misfortune to commission. There are two types of fixing available. Choose either the stud retainer which grips a single pin on the badge back or, alternatively, a sprung pin which fixes under a clip. Both are very secure



I have some marvellous mugs too! These superb ceramic beakers are richly printed in full colour with none fade dyes. They are completely dishwasher safe. Do not confuse these with mass produced 'market' goods. The precision artwork celebrates both the radio and silver screen version of The Navy Lark. The original imagery is complemented by the Society's emblem and facsimile autographs of the cast. For most people this will be the only way to obtain a favourite actor's signature. The mug is delivered in a clear presentation box. Without doubt, you will be the envy of everyone in the NAAFI if you are seen slurping your favourite brew from one of these.

Lurking in a locked filing cabinet I found Povey's secret collection of Radio Times cards. These are A5 sized and reproduced in all their historic colours of their day. I see they have 4 regional names printed on the top, but I'll be posting these out randomly.



Please use the enclosed order form to order any or all of the above. In most cases items will be despatched within 48 hours. I can't afford to have another inspection with this load of smuggled around.

If you are renewing your subs, please use the box on the form and highlight any details which might have changed. If you would like an acknowledgement for your subs please enclose a SAE, and a receipt will wing its way back to you.

TTFN



Evening News
Fri 28 Jan 2005

IF THE CAP FITS:

Much-loved comedian Chic Murray delighted his fans and fellow professionals with his witty and original repertoire of jokes.

Heard the one about the Chic Murray shows?

Fans to enjoy comic genius's legacy at Fringe

ALAN RODEN AND JOHN GIBSON

HE was the greatest Scottish comic of his time and could count Billy Connolly, Ronnie Barker and Bob Monkhouse as his biggest fans.

Now, 20 years after his death, legendary comedian Chic Murray is set to be remembered in a series of special shows planned for this year's Fringe Festival.

The entertainer, who also starred in hit films *Gregory's Girl* and *Casino Royale*, is the subject of a new entertainment show - created by his daughter Annabelle Meredith.

She has already organised a one-off tribute show to be held this Sunday for invited guests, but plans to find a venue and sponsorship for a series of shows this summer.

This weekend's performance, at the Viewpoint Hall in South Oswald Road, in the Grange, will include videos and private recordings of Chic, as well as songs performed by musicians using his original band pieces.

And Ms Meredith, 56, is also putting several of Chic's most treasured souvenirs into an exhibition of memorabilia from the heyday of variety theatre in Edinburgh, where Chic spent most of his life.

She said: "We are putting the tribute on, as they say in showbusiness, out of homage, respect and love. We'll have some excellent musicians at Viewpoint Hall, playing from the original Chic band parts."

"We'll have videos and private recordings that have never been seen or heard before, and we are planning to stage the same show during the Fringe in August."

"My father was a legend when he was alive and he is certainly a legend now. It's lovely he has a legacy of making people smile."

Chic was born Charles Murray in Greenock, in 1919. He began an apprenticeship in engineering at Kincaid's shipyard in 1934, while employing his musical talents in amateur groups such as The Whinhillbilles and Chic and His Chicks. He later formed a double-act with his wife, Maide Dickson.

Billed as The Tall Droll with the Small Doll, their combination of jokes and songs made them a popular attraction on television and in theatres throughout the country.

The peak of their success was in 1956 when they appeared in the Royal Variety Show at the London Palladium. Later, working as a solo act, with a forbidding expression and omnipresent bunnet, Chic offered a comic vision of the world that was absurd, surreal and absolutely unique.

Much mimicked by fellow comics, and considered "the comedian's comedian" by script-writer Barry Cryer, he appeared as the headmaster in *Gregory's Girl* and played Liverpool boss Bill Shankly in the musical play *You'll Never Walk Alone*.

He could count Ronnie Corbett, Eric Sykes, Billy Connolly, Judi Dench and Ronnie Barker among his biggest fans.

Although he was born in the west of Scotland, Chic always regarded Edinburgh as his home town and he spent much of his life here. He died in Edinburgh in 1985 at the age of 65.

Ms Meredith added: "There's still a lot of interest in my parents' performances which had audiences all over the UK in stitches. They truly were originals, a unique twosome, who richly deserve to be remembered at this time. Maide will be there at Sunday's performance. She will be 83 in April but she is very chirpy with it."

"There will be around 100 guests invited, perhaps some famous names, but I'm afraid we can't open it to the public."

"That's why I want to organise a show for the Fringe, so that people can come and remember my dad's life with a smile."

Ms Meredith, who lives in Corstorphine, said she was still searching for a venue, and will require funding before she can give the go-ahead for a show.

But fans at this year's Fringe should be able to enjoy rare archive footage of Chic, as well as viewing memorabilia including his trademark bunnets.

NEWS.scotsman.com

Scottish news direct from Scotland

The following excerpts are from a letter written by Frank Graham, dated 24 October 2002, originally addressed to a Navy Lark enthusiast and subsequently (December 2003) addressed to The Pumamouse (MaryAnne)Website

IN MEMORY OF **SPRINGBOK RADIO** SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO COMEDY

HAVE A CUPPA WITH **FRANK GRAHAM**

Make yourself a cuppa first; this is going to take a while!

The prolific comedy producer/director Tom Meehan, still alive today at an increasingly frail 87 (naturally!) produced a total of 14 comedy shows down the years, in Durban, which all had their origins in England. The Navy Lark was chronologically the 3rd, having been preceded by Men from the Ministry (1968) and Two's Company. Having visited Laurie Wyman, who had apparently written the series through a fog of booze (!), he secured the rights to the scripts and we started to record in (I think) 1972. Tom played our pilot recording to Wyman who, apparently, was very impressed.

Our main cast list was as follows: (better do it in order of rank, I suppose!)

The Admiral: **Reg Richards**
Commander (later Captain) Povey: **Harold Freed**
Lieutenant-Commander Stanton: **Tom Meehan**
Lieutenant Hardy: **David Horner**
Sub-Lieutenant Fanshaw: **Brian Squires** (real name: **Barry Meehan** - Tom's son)
Wren Heather Honeydew & Mrs Ramona Povey: **Maureen Adair**
Chief Petty Officer Perkins: **John Simpson**
Able Seaman Johnson: **Frank Graham**
Uncle Ebenezer Perkins (Nunky) & Able Seaman McNab: **David Blood**
Leading Seaman Taffy Evans & Ignatius Aloysius Acheson: **Tommy Read**

Apart from playing AB Johnson I played other minor roles: Lieutenant Queeg, the vague engine-room officer who always referred to the engines as "the gubbins"; Sir Willoughby Todd-Hunter Brown, a daft colonial diplomat (posted to Potameyland, a remote British colony); an Intelligence Officer who was as thick as a brick; the admiral's verbose Flag Lieutenant who was always being told to "shut his cakehole". My misfortune as Johnson was that he disappeared from the line-up after a while because Ronny Barker who had played the original, left the series as he had other fish to fry, but the Meehans wrote me in as often as possible because Johnson was a popular character. One way and another, I never missed a recording - and we played non-stop once a week for about five years - your mentioning 247 shows bears that out.

One of South Africa's finest comic actors, Tommy Read, appeared from time to time as Captain Acheson, the terminal-hayfever-ridden sneezer) who only had to introduce himself - with a name like that - to set off a sneezing fit (Tommy was much, much funnier than the original actor in the British series - as was Reg Richards as the deaf admiral; it was a toss-up as to who was laughing more hysterically in the studio: the audience or the rest of the cast!) The late Maureen Adair's playing of Mrs Povey as a buck-toothed haridan with a voice like a foghorn was an absolute delight; again, she was much funnier than Heather Chasen.

As you can see, members of the British cast whose own names were used, such as Pertwee, Phillips and Chasen, saw their names give way to replacements.

Apart from the name changes, as mentioned before, the scripts were largely as written. Our audiences were mainly White English-speaking South Africans who were/are largely au fait with British situations and institutions and very little explaining was necessary. I can only think of one thing we did have to explain, and that was the Pompey - Portsmouth thing. Nothing geographical was changed at all.

Our signature tune did jar with a few dyed-in-the-wool Britishers! It was the very jazzy and catchy Dutch Swing College Band's version of Anchors Aweigh (!) which, of course, is an American piece, but most people didn't have a problem with it; it seemed perfect for our purpose and served well.

Scripting: as I say, little was changed. Tom's wife, Joy, had the job of typing them up and doing any editing. Our scripts may have had to be cut to accommodate advertising because Springbok was a

commercial station. The only other change that I was personally aware of, of course, was where AB Johnson was written in.

I must mention sound effects: ours were superior to the Brit ones (sorry to harp on this kind of thing) for two reasons: firstly, our recordings took place 10 years or more after the BBC ones and, obviously, technology had improved. But we also had the services of a young recording engineer named Jannie Celliers who was absolutely brilliant - Spike Milligan would have enjoyed his work! (I am a Goon-fanatic) He produced a range of wonderful effects. Springing to mind is the sound he created of a passenger liner's doleful howling having had its stern inadvertently shelled by Troutbridge! I've got that on tape ...

Regular attenders: I know there were a few, but in the early 70s when SA still didn't have TV, it was difficult to get into our shows because of their enormous (monopolistic!) popularity.

Catch phrases - well! Of course "left hand down a bit" has passed into the language, and one that raised a laugh every time, was Lt Hardy's languid "Grand morning, isn't it!" Very popular were AB Johnson's continuously calling CPO Perkins "rotten - r - o - otten!" as well as regular references to "my mum Min!" and Perkins' "Everybody down!" when Troutbridge was about to ram another ship, the jetty, Tower Bridge (!) etc. But something that has never left me personally is CPO Perkins' mangling of pronunciations - and I use them to this day. Example: the word "frustration" becomes over Perkins' lips: "frustrati-fi-titti-fication"! And: "spontaneously" - "spontaneo-mitti-moniously"! Dunno why I find that so funny, but I do!

Venue: the shows were recorded in the main (auditorium) studio at the SABC in Old Fort Road, Durban in the province of Natal, always either on a Tuesday or a Thursday. The 70s were heady days; we had four audience shows running then: The Navy Lark, Men from the Ministry, Father Dear Father, and Friends and Neighbours and we recorded them in batches of two at 6pm and 8pm sessions on those two days.

The Navy Lark never featured any special guests as the cast list was fairly static. Studio personnel: They were a varied bunch; we didn't have the same people all the time. Tom Meehan certainly directed (but from the stage, as he was in the show) and there was a desk operator who controlled the faders etc, and one effects operator (discs and tapes). Anybody not on mike helped out with the studio effects, such as doors opening and closing, phones being lifted and put down, etc.

Something you may not be aware of is that some years after we had completed the entire repertoire of scripts, the SABC invited us to do the whole thing again ... (the early 80s) but it was a muted affair; by this time we had lost a couple of key actors. Far worse was that our audience had been devastatingly eroded by the advent of TV in this country and studio audiences became so sparse that we stopped recording in Studio one and moved up to the main drama studio, Studio Seven. We had to use canned laughter ... it wasn't the same at all. Only one member of the technical staff (whom we couldn't get all the time) knew how to use the laughter-machine properly and it was all very disappointing.

Your analysis of the characters is largely accurate, with one exception: I don't think CPO Pertwee/Perkins could be described as an incompetent innocent; he was a conniving blackguard! And Pompey only really came into the show some time after inception. We were the island draft; which island I don't know, but we were all "transferred" to Pompey later in the run. The characters were certainly very popular and Wyman did have an extraordinary talent for creating eccentrics - the show was littered with them, particularly most of the minor characters. I hope you have found this meandering reminiscence interesting.

Regards

Frank Graham



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1. CHARLIE: Fred? It's Private Granthemum speaking.
2. FRED: Oh now Charlie - you're not going to start your German spy game again are you?
3. CHARLIE: It's no game, Fred. I've got the jackpot this time.
4. FRED: That's what you said last time. Fred, you said, I've caught a parachutist in uniform trying to put his collapsible bicycle together. That turned out to be Sid the postman trying to get the chain back on his G.P.O. bike.
5. CHARLIE: Well how was I to know. He was a new man and when I saw G.P.O. written on his hat I thought it meant he was a Gestapo Police Officer.
6. FRED: Very likely but that probably explains why you 'aven't 'ad any mail through your letter box ever since.
Now who've you got this time?
7. CHARLIE: Oh nothing much....just Hitler, Goering, and the rest of the High Command. Take it from me Fred, the rats have deserted the sinking ship.
8. FRED: Oh. Nice going Charlie. Before we go any further I think I'd better have a little word with 'Itler, personal like.
9. CHARLIE: Right Fred. Hang on. (TO OTHERS) 'Itler.
10. PHILLIPS: Yes - I mean who?
11. CHARLIE: Police Constable Fred Tiddy wants a word with you.
12. PHILLIPS: Mr. Murray sir, I think you'd better take it in case Adolph here gets confused.

1. NO.1: Yes - er - perhaps it would be better if I took the call.
2. CHARLIE: Right. (TO PHONE) Fred - here's Ribbentrop - and he's had his hair dyed an' all.
3. NO.1: Hallo Constable, sorry to trouble you like this, but I'm sure I can explain everything quite satisfactorily.
4. FRED: I thought you could, sir. I'm used to old Charlie. Now if you wouldn't mind just giving me your name and where you've come from...
5. NO.1: Yes certainly....My name --oh! Now this is a bit tricky. I'm afraid I can't tell you my name.
6. FRED: I understand sir. You wish to report yourself as a loss of memory.
7. NO.1: Yes - no!
8. PHILLIPS: (ASIDE) I say Chief, I don't think it's going too well.
9. PERTWEE: It is as far as Charlie's concerned. I think we're as good as in the larder.
10. TAFFY: I hope we won't be in there too long cos we'll be starving.
11. JOHNSON: Well it was your idea. You said eat everything you can and it'll make more room.
12. TAFFY: Very likely but that was an idea that failed miserably. All that happened was that you got bigger.
13. NO.1: D'you mind you two? I'm on the phone. Hallo.

1. FRED: Hallo sir. If you can't tell me who you are or where you come from, p'raps you'll tell me what you're doing there.
2. NO.1: Oh - well - no I can't actually. You see it's a military secret.
3. FRED: I see. P'raps you'll put me back to Private Granthemum.
4. NO.1: No, no, you don't understand.
5. FRED: Private Granthemum please.
6. NO.1: Oh very well. (TO CHARLIE) He wants you again.
7. CHARLIE: Hallo Fred. Private Granthemum speaking.
8. FRED: Lock 'em up Charlie. I think you got the jackpot this time. I'll be round as soon as I can.
9. GRAMS: MUSIC LINK
10. PHILLIPS: Cor - if only there weren't so many shelves in this larder it would help.
11. PERTWEE: Let's face it sir, if Johnson wasn't in this larder it would help.
12. JOHNSON: Wasn't my fault. It was Taffy's. He was the one who told me to eat everything and I never want to see a cornflake again. When you have to eat them dry, they crunch you know. Crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch. It's jolly unnerving.
13. TAFFY: You can say that again. When you got to the bottom it sounded as if the foundations of the building were giving way.

1. JOHNSON: Well that was an accident. I didn't realise that big bit was a plastic Robin Hood. Mind you, his little arrow had a lovely flavour.
2. NO.1: Let's stop chuntering about Johnson's size which we all know and love, and concentrate on how we're going to get out of here.
3. PHILLIPS: Well it's just a theory of course, but I saw a film once where a lot of chaps made a horse out of wood and a lot of other chaps - not the first chaps, but a lot of other chaps - dug a hole under the wooden horse - and shored it up with a lot of wood - not the wood that was in the wooden horse, but some other wood from some other chaps - not the first chaps who were sitting in the wooden horse which was over the hole - that was shored up by wood - which had been got by the other chaps - or was it the first lot of chaps and the second lot of wood in the first place or the second lot of chaps and the first lot of wood - or the.....
4. NO.1: What happened then?
5. PHILLIPS: I don't know. You see just as all the chaps were getting in the horse, I dropped my ice on the carpet. and when I came up, a complete stranger was playing a selection from "Show Boat" on the organ.
6. PERTWEE: Yes sir. Well with due respect, if we decide to make a horse, we know where to get the wood from - your 'ead.
7. NO.1: Quite Chief, but we've got to get out of here somehow.

1. TAFFY: Why don't we wait till the policeman comes and let my Uncle Edwin sue 'em.
2. NO.1: Nice idea, Goldstein, but I don't think the policeman's going to believe us.
3. JOHNSON: I'm not 'appy.
4. PERTWEE: Belt up. Now sir, without being too much of a perspey-catical why don't we hop it through the little window up there! I mean apart from it being crowded in here, Pertwee's averse to meeting coppers, even when they're suppose to be on his side.
5. NO.1: And a rare occurence that is. Right. If we give each other a leg up it should be possible to squeeze through. Mr. Phillips first. Stand on Johnson. You couldn't wish for a more solid foundation.
6. PHILLIPS: No good sir. The window's too small. I can't get me head through.
7. PERTWEE: Try taking your flat hat off, sir. With that spraucy peak you've got it might make quite a difference.
8. PHILLIPS: Lumme. You're right. There's bags of room now.
9. NO.1; Right. He's gone. You're next, Goldstein.
10. TAFFY: Well I don't mind going next sir, but if you don't mind I'm Leading Seaman Goldstein.
11. NO.1: Don't argue and hurry up.
12. TAFFY: Aye aye sir.
13. NO.1: Right, he's gone. After you Chief.



More next time.....